Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A system <u>located at a meter site</u> ~~for providing real time~~ ~~information on the~~ <u>in communication with an</u> internet <u>site</u> ~~of the amount of~~ a <u>utility</u> <u>company that sells a</u> utility commodity<u>, said system</u> ~~used at a meter and its cost~~ comprising

    (A) ~~an internet site at which the usage of said utility commodity at said meter is~~ ~~viewed and at which a utility company posts pricing information for the use of said utility~~ ~~commodity at said meter;~~

    ~~(B)~~ an automatic meter reader that <u>includes a microprocessor and,</u> <u>independently of said internet site,</u> provides <u>and stores</u> real time information on the amount of said utility commodity used at said meter<u>, calculates the cost of said amount,</u> <u>and displays said information and said cost at said meter site; and</u>

    (~~C~~<u>B</u>) ~~communicating means~~ <u>a microserver</u> for sending information between said automatic meter reader and said internet site, whereby said utility company sends pricing information to said automatic meter reader and, using said pricing information, said automatic meter reader calculates the cost of said utility commodity and sends said cost and amount used to said internet site ~~where it is posted in real time; and~~

    ~~(D) optional means for directly communicating between said automatic meter~~ ~~reader and said utility company without communicating with said internet~~.

2. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein ~~said cost is also~~ ~~posted at said automatic meter reader~~ <u>a plurality of said systems are in communication</u>

with said internet site.

3. (Original) A system according to Claim 1 wherein payment is made at said internet site.

4. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 ~~wherein payment is made~~ including means for paying for said utility commodity at said automatic meter reader.

5. (Original) A system according to Claim 1 wherein access to said automatic meter reader is protected by a password.

6. (Original) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said utility commodity is electric power.

7. (Original) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader calculates said cost with a delay of less than 5 minutes.

8. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader displays ~~data~~ said information and said cost in an LCD display window ~~at the site of said meter~~.

9. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said ~~communicating~~ automatic meter reader also communicates by means ~~is~~ of a telephone line.

10. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said ~~communicating~~ automatic meter reader also communicates by means ~~is~~ of a wireless connection.

11. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said ~~optional means is~~ system and said internet site also communicate by means of a direct phone link or a wireless link.

12. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said system includes a means for maintaining an unique IP address for said automatic meter reader, whereby said automatic meter reader is reached online with the same ID regardless of the internet logon ID.

13. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein ~~said amount~~ information about the amount of said commodity used is sent via an internet server provider and the internet to a said utility company server, said server selects a billing algorithm and computes a bill, and said bill is converted to a web-enabled format and is displayed on a utility company website as an online bill, the above process loops continuously thereby providing real time updating of said bill.

14. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein ~~said amount information is stored at said automatic meter reader,~~ said automatic meter reader computes a bill~~,~~ and said bill is converted into a web-enabled format and is displayed as a webpage on the internet.

15. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein ~~said amount information is stored at said automatic meter reader,~~ said automatic meter reader computes a bill~~, said amount information~~ that is transmitted to a the server of said utility company ~~server, is stored at said utility company server and at said automatic meter reader, and said bill is displayed at said automatic meter reader~~.

16. (Original) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader includes a card reader for credit or debit card payment of said bill.

4

17. (Currently amended) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said automatic meter reader sets off an alarm when said pricing <u>information</u> changes.

18. (Currently amended) A method of generating, displaying, and paying a utility bill <u>using a system according to Claim 1</u> comprising installing a <u>said</u> system ~~according to Claim 1~~ <u>at a meter site</u>.

19. (Currently amended) A system for providing real time information on the internet and at an electric power meter <u>site</u> of the amount of electric power used at that meter and its cost comprising

    (A) an internet site at which the power usage at said meter, the price of said power, and the charges for using said power at said meter can be viewed;

    (B) an automatic meter reader that <u>includes a microprocessor and, independently of said internet site,</u> provides <u>and stores</u> real time information on the amount of said utility commodity being used at said meter, <u>calculates the cost of said amount, generating a bill, and displays said bill at said electric power meter;</u>

    (C) <u>means for paying said bill at said electric power meter; and</u>

    <u>(D)</u> means for sending information between said automatic meter reader and said internet site, whereby said utility company sends pricing information to said automatic meter reader and, using said pricing information, said automatic meter reader calculates, in real time, the cost of said electric power usage at said meter and sends <u>usage information including</u> said cost ~~and~~ , said amount, <u>said bill, and any payment of said bill</u> to said internet site where it is posted~~; and~~

(D) optional means for directly communicating between said automatic meter reader and said utility company without communicating with said internet.

20. (Currently amended) A method of generating, displaying, and paying a utility bill using a system according to Claim 19 comprising installing a said system according to Claim 19 at an electric power meter site.

21. (Currently amended) A system for providing real time information on the internet and at an electric power meter site of the amount of electric power used at that meter and its cost comprising

    (A) an internet site at which the power usage at said meter, the price of said power, and the cost for using said power at said meter can be viewed;

    (B) an automatic meter reader that includes a microprocessor and, independently of said internet site, provides and stores continuous information on the quantity of said utility commodity being used at said meter, calculates the cost of said amount, generating a bill, and displays said bill at said electric power meter;

    (C) means for paying said bill at said electric power meter; and

    (D) means for sending information between said automatic meter reader and said internet site, whereby said utility company sends pricing information to said automatic meter reader and, using said pricing information, said automatic meter reader calculates the cost, in real time, of said electric power usage at said meter, posts said amount and cost at said meter, and sends usage information including said cost and , said amount, said bill, and any payment of said bill to said internet site where it is also

6

posted; and

(D) ~~optional~~ means for directly communicating between said automatic meter reader and said utility company without communicating ~~with~~ <u>through</u> said internet.

22. (Currently amended) A method of generating, displaying, and paying a utility bill <u>using a system according to Claim 21</u> comprising installing ~~a~~ <u>said</u> system ~~according to Claim 21~~ <u>at an electric power meter site</u>.

23. (New) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said utility commodity is natural gas.

24. (New) A system according to Claim 1 wherein said utility commodity is water.